

State of the Coast Guard 2014

This is Our Way

The U.S. Coast Guard's Enduring Value to the Nation

Good morning, Shipmates! Ladies, Gentleman and special guests – to all our shipmates worldwide that will see this on delay – and our future leaders and heroes in New London and Cape May.

It should come as no surprise when I tell you that I loved going to sea. Shipboard life has traditions, daily rhythms, and predictability that helps us to deal with the ultimate in unpredictability – the sea. And as a ship captain, I always enjoyed going up to the bridge to check in with the watchstanders, and to do a self-assessment on where we were, and where we were going.

I've always spoken to you in the words and phrases of a ship's Captain, because that is how I grew up in the Service. But I am first and always a Coast Guardsman, and every part of our Service is vitally important to who we are. And each year I've appreciated this opportunity to figuratively go up to the bridge to scan the horizon and check on our progress along the charted course. So what do I see?

When I spoke to you two years ago, I said we were sailing in "Uncertain and Stormy Seas". Those "Uncertain and Stormy Seas" continue...but the barometer seems to be rising, the winds have veered and abated slightly, and I think I see some rays of sunshine over the horizon. What an extraordinary time for our Coast Guard!

The cutter HOLLYHOCK, along with our 30-year old 140-foot icebreaking tugs and Canadian icebreakers, is on St. Claire River near Detroit grooming navigational channels in the worst ice cover the Great Lakes have seen in decades. Cutter MACKINAW just completed almost two months of continuous icebreaking in the passages between the Great Lakes, providing escorts and direct assistance to commercial traffic, and validating decisions made nearly 15 years ago to build a new Great Lakes icebreaker.

The 25-year old patrol boats of Patrol Forces Southwest Asia are conducting security operations along with our U. S. Navy Shipmates in the Arabian Gulf. Closer to home, Coast Guard Port Security Unit 301 guards the approaches to Guantanamo Bay. The buoy tender HENRY BLAKE marks the navigational channel to Seattle harbor, facilitating the safe approaches of commerce to our shores.

A Coast Guard Auxiliarist assists with commercial fishing vessel safety exams for the Prevention Department of Sector San Diego. And U. S. Coast Guard men and women negotiate ballast water protocols and Arctic policy in London at the International Maritime Organization. Seventeen major cutters and numerous aircraft are deployed off New England, in the Caribbean, Eastern Pacific and Bering Sea protecting fisheries, interdicting human smugglers and narcotics traffickers, and enforcing U. S. laws and international treaties both within our Exclusive Economic Zone and the high seas.

These and other Coast Guard activities are the day to day business of a maritime nation. This is maritime governance and a key part of our national security. The United States Coast Guard is the best maritime governance force in the world due to the support of the Administration, the Congress, and the American taxpayers – and the dedication and professionalism of Coast Guard men and women.

Just two years ago I was on the pier in Alameda, on the shores of the Pacific, beginning my second State of the Coast Guard address. I stood in front of our first National Security Cutter, BERTHOLF, and joked about how much I liked that “new Coast Guard Cutter smell”.

And it was nice – and we’ve been fortunate to have more of it since then!

In October we christened our fourth National Security Cutter, the HAMILTON, which will soon join BERTHOLF, WAESCHE and STRATTON. We will christen our fifth, the JAMES, this summer. They add a level of capability that moves the Coast Guard to even more effective service at greater value for the taxpayer.

Our sixth, the MUNRO, is in production. We have contracted for the major propulsion systems and other equipment for number seven, the KIMBALL. With FY14 spending in place, we now have the construction funding for KIMBALL and we have received the funding to purchase long lead time materials for our eighth NSC, the MIDGETT. And with continued support in FY15, we hope to soon complete one of the most significant acquisition projects our history!

Closer to shore, our new Fast Response Cutters have become the workhorse of our interdiction operations in the approaches to Florida and Puerto Rico. We’ve commissioned seven of these cutters.

Our newest, the CHARLES SEXTON, will be commissioned next week. They are being delivered on time and on budget. We have 10 more in production, have awarded the contract for an additional six, and now have funding for six more beyond that – for a total of 30. We are more than half way to our planned purchase of 58 patrol boats!

We have also received 148 of the 170 Response Boats Medium we've ordered. They are the most capable response boats in our history. These have also been delivered on time, and on budget!

And after an extremely competitive bidding process, we recently selected three finalists who will now compete to produce the most affordable and capable design possible for the nation's new Offshore Patrol Cutters.

We have reached this milestone at a critical time. Our current fleet of 50-year old medium endurance cutters are 20 years past their design life.

Meanwhile, over the past ten years we have rebuilt our acquisition workforce and created a culture of efficiency and proven stewardship. Coupled with a primary focus on affordability through a competitive design process, we are ready at this moment to begin the most important shipbuilding initiative in our 223-year history.

Many have worked hard to make this a reality, but it would not be possible without our acquisition professionals. In 2006 we set about to reform our acquisition process with one goal in mind: build a model acquisition force for the Federal government. We have accomplished that goal – and you don't have to take my word for it.

In June, DHS announced the annual Program Management Awards, which looked across the Department to recognize the accomplishments of acquisition professionals who have demonstrated superior performance.

Out of five possible awards, our Coast Guard acquisition team took four.

Mr. Ken King was selected as the Program Manager of the Year. He led completion of the Patrol Boat Mission Effectiveness project eight months ahead of schedule and twenty-five million dollars *under* budget! Rory Souther was the Acquisition Professional of the Year; our HC-144 Maritime Patrol Aircraft was the Program of the Year; and our Acquisition Support Office was the Acquisition

Executive Team of the Year, helping ensure near one hundred percent compliance with all Major Systems Acquisition requirements.

We provide sound stewardship of taxpayer dollars. This year we became the first military Service to achieve a clean financial audit. This is a remarkable achievement that required all hands effort across the Service. From the dedication and persistence of our Storekeepers and property custodians in the field, to the extraordinary efforts of our financial managers, program managers, operators, and mission support personnel in every corner of the organization.

We are now poised for a great undertaking. We sit at the intersection where the vital necessity to recapitalize our aging offshore fleet connects with the expertise, timing and competition to do so affordably. To lose this opportunity would affect the very shape of our Service and impact our ability to conduct our missions for the next forty years.

We are doing our part. What we need now is stable, predictable funding to ensure that we can continue to be the world's best Coast Guard and America's maritime governance force well into the future.

I must take this opportunity to thank our new Service Secretary, the Honorable Jeh Johnson, for his tremendous advocacy in this effort. Even in the short time he has been our Secretary, his strong leadership and unqualified support for the Coast Guard has been clear. He understands us. He knows the value we provide to the Department and the nation, and the caliber of the men and women who serve. We are fortunate to have the strong leadership of Secretary Johnson, Deputy Secretary Majorkas, and the team in our Department as we face the challenges ahead.

As much as I love that new cutter smell, I tell you what...“new building smell” is pretty good, too. Isn't this incredible? For the first time in our 223 year history, the Coast Guard has a headquarters built just for us.

I'd like to welcome you all to the Douglas A. Munro Coast Guard Headquarters building.

Our Coast Guard is fortunate to have many great heroes. We have a long history of men and women with the courage to navigate those uncertain and stormy seas that drive others to safe harbor. Douglas Munro was one of those people.

It was 71 years ago, during World War II, that he led a group of landing craft back to the beach on Guadalcanal to evacuate U.S. Marines. He used his boat as a shield, ensuring that Marines were evacuated from the beach. During the fighting he was mortally wounded by enemy fire.

His last words, asking about the Marines. . . . “Did they get off?” With his dying breath he thought not of himself, but of those he had gone to rescue.

Douglas Munro *defines* us. He captures perfectly who we are as Coast Guardsmen, and provides a shining example of our Service ethos: I will protect them. I will defend them. I will save them. I am their shield.

His name on this Headquarters building is a tribute to that spirit. It will remind everyone who walks into this building who we are.

We know Munro’s last words because Ray Evans, his best friend, was with him as he died. Douglas Munro and Ray Evans enlisted together, served together, and fought at Guadalcanal together. Ray Evan passed away last year.

Two weeks ago, these friends were reunited as this space in the Douglas A. Munro Coast Guard Headquarters Building was dedicated as the Commander Ray Evans Conference Center.

There is no better location than here – in the place named for these heroes – to speak to you about the State of Our Coast Guard. For this is our story, and who we are.

One month ago this week I spoke at a memorial to a shipmate who gave his life in Service to our country: Boatswains Mate Third Class Travis Obendorf of the Cutter WAESCHE, who was mortally injured during a rescue operation in the Bering Sea. Two weeks ago, we remembered Senior Chief Terrell Horne of the cutter HALIBUT. The drug traffickers who killed him during drug interdiction operations last year were convicted in Federal court of his murder.

Too often, when people ask about our Coast Guard, we talk about our missions. And that’s important. We do a lot of great things. But if you want someone to know our story, don’t tell them *what we do*.

Tell them about Douglas Munro, Ray Evans, Travis Obendorf, and Terrell Horne.

What defines us as Coast Guardsmen is not what we do, but who we are and how we do it. You've heard me say it for years. As I speak to our people, I often close with these words:

We are Coast Guardsmen.
This is our chosen profession.
This is our way.

This. Is. Our. Way.

We practice and revere the manners of our profession. In three short months, we will hold a ceremony at Headquarters that is performed hundreds of times every year in our Service -- a Change of Command. It signifies the continuity of command and the transfer of absolute authority, responsibility and accountability. This year, command of the Coast Guard will transfer from me to the 25th Commandant, and I am reminded of the many times I have reported on the condition of my ship to the next Commanding Officer as we prepared for relief. It is a never ending process, part of the rhythm of our Service.

As a maritime Nation, America needs our service.

We rely on the safe, secure and free flow of goods across the seas and into our ports and waterways. More than 90% of trade is carried in ships. Shipping – whether international, coastwise, or through our inland waterways – is the most efficient form of commerce and is the lifeblood of our economy. We have a fundamental obligation to our economic security, the maritime industry, and professional mariners.

I have said before – I believe that one measure of a nation's greatness is its ability to provide mariners with safe and secure approaches to its ports. We counter maritime threats using the DHS strategy of "layered security". This begins in foreign ports and spans the high seas, because the best place to counter a threat is well *before* it reaches our borders. We do this with our DHS partners, especially Customs and Border Protection.

Our Nation faces a range of maritime threats that continue to grow and evolve. The global economy is spurring investment in ever larger and more complex ships to carry goods across the seas. The Arctic is seeing dramatic increases in shipping, natural resource exploration, and other human activity. And we continue to see persistent efforts by terrorists and transnational criminal networks to exploit the maritime environment.

It is the Coast Guard's responsibility, working with partner agencies in our government, with foreign allies, and professionals in maritime industry, to detect and interdict contraband and illicit trade, enforce U.S. immigration laws, protect valuable natural resources, and counter threats to U.S. maritime and economic security worldwide. It is most effective to do this as far from our shores as possible, and our offshore fleet of cutters is critical to this layered security approach.

Far too many drugs still reach our shores. And we stop only a fraction of the contraband our intelligence tells us is moving. But the Coast Guard still interdicts over twice the quantity of cocaine at sea – in the transit zone, before it reaches our shores – than all other U.S. law enforcement forces interdict inside our borders.

But it's not just about the tonnage. It's about the violence and destabilizing effects those drugs have on governments and economies as they move through Central and South America.

And it's not just about the drugs, either. For every shipment we interdict at sea, we gather valuable information about the transnational criminal networks that move these drugs. By understanding these illicit networks we are better prepared to combat other illicit networks: human traffickers, international terrorists, and those who would transport weapons of mass destruction. Coast Guard interdictions remain a key weapon in the U.S. arsenal to combat transnational criminal networks.

One element of maritime governance is that a nation must have assured access to ice-bound territory in the Polar regions. The Coast Guard provides that capability, and once again has a second operational icebreaker. The thirty-eight year old POLAR STAR, the world's most powerful non-nuclear heavy icebreaker, has returned to active service and recently completed operations in the Antarctic in support of U.S. national security interests. And we have begun the process of developing and analyzing the requirements to design the nation's next heavy icebreaker.

And it's not just with our cutters where we are achieving operational success while providing sound stewardship of the taxpayer's dollar.

Thanks to the hard work of many, including the great support of Congress, we will soon be receiving 14 new C-27J Spartan aircraft. This is the result of strong cooperation and hard work between the Air Force; the Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service; the Defense Department and U.S. Special Operations Command; and our own Department. These aircraft provide a proven platform of exceptional capability that will produce efficiencies in parts, maintenance and training. We also avoided more than *five hundred million dollars* in future acquisition costs.

We've been doing hard work ashore as well.

We are still working to recover from the effects of Superstorm Sandy. Many of our units and shore infrastructure sustained significant damage. Thanks to outstanding support from Congress and the administration in the form of \$274 million dollars in supplemental appropriations – and the hard work of our civil engineers, shore infrastructure and logistics professionals, C4IT professions, and the self-help of unit personnel – we are making progress on restoring our stations, piers and housing. More work remains – a reminder that the Coasties who responded with determination and bravery during the storm were also victims of the superstorm.

This past summer, within a week after the President's release of the new National Arctic Strategy, the Coast Guard released our own Arctic Strategy, leading the rest of the Federal government with the vision for how to provide maritime governance in this emerging ocean frontier.

The mandate for maritime governance in the Arctic is as clear as it is for the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, or the Caribbean Sea. Our strategy is guiding Coast Guard and national efforts as we face growing maritime activity in the arctic.

Next year the United States will assume the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. This Council recently adopted resolutions to prepare for and respond to spills that could result from increased oil and gas exploration, and to coordinate search and rescue operations. These agreements focus on common risks and interests of member states, and provide the foundation for future coordination in other areas.

And the Coast Guard is working to lead U.S. efforts in the Arctic with Canada, Russia, and other Arctic nations.

One of our strengths is the ability to sustain strong coordination and operational relationships with other maritime governance forces around the world. In the Pacific, we work as part of the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum with maritime governance forces from Canada, Russia, Japan, South Korea and China. We also work closely with Australia, the Philippines and Vietnam. In fact, in September I became the first Service Chief to visit Vietnam in nearly five decades.

Working at senior levels of their government, we built upon two years of deployable Coast Guard law enforcement training with the Vietnam Coast Guard to increase cooperation on maritime governance between our nations.

In the Caribbean and in Central and South America, we have bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements with twenty-nine maritime nations to help facilitate our missions of law enforcement, search and rescue and pollution response. These missions facilitate securing our borders and the safeguarding of trade.

We go to these places and develop these partnerships because of who we are – because of our way. We are trusted, and our value and commitment to maritime governance is recognized throughout the world.

Your Coast Guard has done much this year to keep our commitment to the American people. But we have worked equally hard to keep our commitment to one another as Shipmates. Through our Family Campaign Plan, we continue to provide our Coast Guard families with quality housing, access to convenient and affordable child care, and a range of services and support programs to help with the challenges that accompany military life.

We now have close to 400 Ombudsmen who along with our Service's Ombudsman-at-large – Linda Papp – have devoted thousands of hours of volunteer service to our units. Duty requires many of our members to spend time away from home, often far from family and loved ones. Our Coast Guard men and women are what make our Service great; we will continue working to support the families who support them.

One of our greatest strengths as a Service is the diversity of our people, and we continue to work to more closely reflect the nation we protect. That's because passion, and good ideas, and sacrifice, and all those things that make us who we are and define our way are found in all our people. Our way values the diversity of

backgrounds, experiences and perspectives represented within our team – it adds richness and texture to who we are and how we operate. Our way is a function what Doctor Martin Luther King, 50 years ago, called the “content of our character.” The character of our people, the character of our Service.

We have also made progress in our efforts to eliminate sexual assault, care for the survivors of this crime, and hold sexual predators accountable. I made a commitment to the President and Congress. I made a commitment to you and to the American people. We will eliminate sexual assault from our Coast Guard.

We are taking aggressive steps to do this. We have established the Military Campaign Office to drive completion of the initiatives contained in our Service-wide plan to end sexual assault.

We have also provided additional training to our special agents and attorneys who investigate and prosecute these crimes and who advise our commanders. I continue to have faith in our military justice system which is the best in the world, and in our convening authorities whose diligent and deliberate judgment in every hard case makes it so.

To ensure we achieve results, we have committed an additional *five million dollars* and 32 military and civilian billets to this effort. This includes creation of our cadre of Special Victims Counsel – specially trained Coast Guard attorneys dedicated to assisting victims of sexual assault. Their sole focus is representing the victim throughout the entire process of holding a perpetrator accountable, ensuring the victim has an advocate to speak for them.

I want to speak directly to survivors of sexual assault in our Coast Guard: I want to let you know that you can come forward without fear of reprisal or retaliation, and that your rights and dignity will be protected. I deeply regret there was *ever* a time in our Service when this was not the case. But I have no greater responsibility than to ensure no Coast Guardsman ever has to experience the devastation of sexual assault at the hands of someone they thought was a Shipmate.

Our efforts have been strong. But by the time we are focusing on response we have already failed -- because it means a sexual assault has occurred.

We must succeed in *preventing sexual assaults*. And if we are truly going to succeed, we can no longer ignore the insidious link between the abuse of alcohol and sexual assault.

Sexual predators see alcohol as a weapon which weakens the victim and facilitates their attack. It also impairs the ability of shipmates to act, to step forward and protect others.

There are no bystanders in our Coast Guard.

We either demonstrate the courage to act – or we enable a predator. We each have a duty to protect our shipmates, and that duty demands courage. Whether you see a shipmate who is vulnerable or see a predator preparing to strike – You. Must. Act. This is also our way.

Solving this problem will also take continued leadership. Leadership not just at my level. Leadership must succeed in thousands of places across the Service every day for the Coast Guard to function. I rely upon our Chief Petty Officers, in particular, to lead in this effort.

The Chiefs Mess is the backbone of the Service. We rely on Chiefs to lead others at every level, and the Coast Guard succeeds on the foundation of a professional cadre of Chiefs, Senior Chiefs and Master Chiefs.

There have been some isolated cases of those wearing the rank insignia of a Chief who have been convicted of sexual assault, or who have stood by and failed to prevent sexual assault when duty demanded they do so. We know these were not Chiefs, because no real Chief Petty Officer in the U.S. Coast Guard would do these things. We have seen similar failings from officers, and they betray the commission they have sworn their lives to.

I have never seen a problem a strong Chief's Mess could not solve, and in a combined effort with the Wardroom, we will defeat sexual assault in the Service.

The ethical, courageous, and constant leadership I demand of Chiefs and officers, I expect from leaders at all levels: military, civilian, and Auxiliarists.

And I am encouraged as I see individuals who really get it. Those like Chief Storekeeper Leanna Evans of Sector San Diego. In addition to leading her Department to a near perfect CFO audit, she volunteers as the Command Drug and Alcohol Representative and, as an experienced Victim Advocate, also devotes time to mentoring the nine Victim Advocates at the Sector. She sees firsthand effects of these two problems every day – and she has dedicated herself to being part of the solution. She is an involved and committed leader who displays proficiency of craft in her chosen rate, and is equally dedicated to helping to those in need.

It's that kind of leadership that defines our way and will help us end sexual assault in our Coast Guard.

Sexual assault is not our only problem. Alcohol abuse contributes to many acts that are contrary to our core values. Next week I will direct a new and stronger policy to take this problem head on. There will be increased accountability.

As I outlined at my first State of the Coast Guard address, my first Guiding Principle has been to Steady the Service. To a large degree, this has been about metering the pace of change in our Service. When I became Commandant, we were in the midst of one of the largest reorganizations in our Service's history. We were also completing the transition to Sector commands and erasing many of the cultural boundaries that existed between our professional communities.

I was concerned that our doctrine, training and resourcing had not kept pace with our mission demands and the pace of organizational change – and it was affecting our people and our mission excellence, manifesting itself in the deaths of 15 Coast Guardsmen in operational or training accidents.

I believe all these factors combined to create an environment where complacency was creeping in, proficiency was waning, and we were losing focus on operational risk management.

We set about to fix that – and I believe we have made great progress.

But Steady the Service is about much more than that. Early on in this job I realized that it is really about who we are as Coast Guardsmen. It's about knowing and recommitting ourselves to those bedrock principles and beliefs that exemplify our way and that have defined us throughout our entire Service history. It's not simply about history. It's deeper. It's about our heritage.

Today we release a new version of our Service's foundational doctrine, Coast Guard Publication 1. It describes who we are, where we came from, and where we're going. It speaks to the way we have been America's force for Maritime Governance and the enduring legacy of our Service.

It's one thing to read about our history – it's quite another thing to experience it. For over 223 years, Coast Guard men and women have been doing incredible work in support of this nation. From literally the first days of our Republic, when we

were known as the Revenue Cutter Service, our people have been answering the call of those in peril on the sea.

One of my real passions has been to ensure that we have a place to preserve that history; a place to honor those who have come before and to learn from them. And I've been saying ever since I became Commandant that I was dedicated to the establishment of a National Coast Guard Museum.

I'm happy to report to you that I now believe that dream will be a reality.

Last April I joined the State of the Connecticut, the City of New London, and the National Coast Guard Museum Association to announce a proposed location and to unveil the conceptual design for a new National Coast Guard Museum that will be built with private donations. This is long overdue, and it is a project important to all Coast Guardsmen. It's a place where our story can be told and our contributions and sacrifices can be seen, understood, studied and shared.

Certainly the museum will be a place to honor Douglas Munro, Ray Evans, Travis Oberndorf, or Terrell Horne. But it will be so much more. You will see on full display something that has always been part of who we are – and defined our way. It's something I've been fiercely committed to since I became Commandant.

And that's proficiency. Proficiency in Craft, Proficiency in Leadership, and Disciplined Initiative. And you'll see it everywhere.

You'll see it in the Proficiency of Craft displayed by Coast Guard Aviator Number 1 Elmer Stone, the pilot and navigator aboard the first ever trans-Atlantic flight.

And it's demonstrated in our Coast Guard today – in LCDR Dan Broadhurst, the pilot of HITRON helicopter 6547, and Avionics Electrical Technician Michael Trees, his precision marksman, who in December were awarded the first ever Coast Guard Air Medals for a law enforcement mission.

While pursuing a drug laden go-fast, LCDR Broadhurst flew his helicopter *backwards* 50-feet over the water at the edge of its flight envelope. This was to give Petty Officer Trees a clear shot at the go-fast's engines. Despite the darkness, heavy sea state and evasive maneuvers by the go-fast, Petty Officer Trees destroyed all three of the engines with eleven rounds of disabling fire. This resulted in the interdiction of 3500 pounds of cocaine valued at \$42 million dollars and the arrest of four traffickers.

As Coast Guardsmen, we continuously pursue mastery of the operational arts of our profession. And our success also requires proficiency in the mission support areas of logistics, finance, engineering, personnel, information technology, as well as every other discipline in our Service.

You'll see Proficiency in Leadership demonstrated by RADM Halert Shephard, who came to the Coast Guard when we absorbed the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation from the Commerce Department during World War II. He became our first Chief of Merchant Marine Safety, and an award in his name now recognizes exceptional leadership in merchant marine safety, security, or environmental protection.

And the same is true today. When a 154-foot tug sank in the Mississippi River near Le Clair, Iowa, carrying over 100,000 gallons of oil on board – it could have been one of the most significant pollution events in years. It fell to Marine Safety Detachment Quad Cities at Rock Island, Illinois – one of our smallest units, with only 13 active and reserve members – to lead the initial response.

LT Kory Stitz and Marine Safety Technician Second Class Matt Mahaffey, immediately responded and began coordination with local fire and response crews to mitigate the impact of this casualty. Their proficiency paid off as they worked around the clock with other federal, state and local partners, and the maritime industry. Their leadership ensured a successful salvage and recovery operation.

Proficiency in leadership requires the same commitment and sacrifice as proficiency in craft. We place the duty to serve those we lead, and the Coast Guard, before our own well-being. That's humility. We stand up for people, take risks when prudence dictates, and do the right thing no matter the personal cost. That's courage.

Proficiency in craft and proficiency in leadership enable individuals, teams, and units to attain *disciplined initiative*. We rely on Coast Guardsmen to act quickly and decisively within the scope of their authority, guided by a firm understanding of the desired objectives and commander's intent.

In our museum, you'll see the crew of the Revenue Cutter *EAGLE*. When attacked by superior numbers during the War of 1812, her Captain ran her ashore and the crew dragged her cannon up the cliffs where they could duel with the British ships from an advantage of height. When they had exhausted their shot, they fired back the enemy's own shot that lodged in the hill below them.

And once again, we still see examples today. Consider the crew of the Response-Boat Small from Station Golden Gate. While conducting boardings, they received word of a person in the water needing assistance.

Once on scene they recovered the individual from the water, but a quick assessment revealed she was not breathing and had no heartbeat. The crew started CPR and used the boat's Defibrillator to revive her.

But they knew she needed advanced care quickly, and they were 20 minutes from the closest pier. However, emergency medical personnel were in sight on shore just 300 yards from their location. The coxswain, Boatswains Mate Third Class Sean Fadely, a Coast Guard Reservist serving on active duty, made the decision ground his boat to get the patient directly to shore. Petty Officer Fadely, along with BM1 Kevin Hambrick, assessed risk, developed an action plan, and safely beached the boat. The crew carried the patient directly to the waiting medical crew, saving her life.

They were able to do this because of proficiency gained through practice and training, as well as their discipline in operational risk management.

Proficient Coast Guardsmen exercise initiative in a disciplined way, knowing that judgment calls in difficult circumstances may deviate from doctrine.

You know, three weeks ago I watched the first episode of the new Coast Guard television series, "Coast Guard Cape Disappointment". One of the segments showed a helicopter from Air Station Astoria recovering a man lost in the surf. The interviewer later spoke with one of the crewmen, Aviation Maintenance Technician Third Class Rashad Gipson.

As Petty Officer Gipson described the rescue, he spoke about the need for *proficiency* in doing the dangerous work we do. For me, it was a gratifying moment; because it was evident our drive for proficiency – and our work to *Steady the Service* and reinforce those fundamental principles – is catching on at the deckplates and flight decks, where it is the most important.

And it's catching on with our future leaders. Last month I gave my annual leadership address to the Cadets at the Coast Guard Academy. I received a question about change from Cadet Second Class Eric Jackson.

He recognized that I have seen a lot of change in the Service, and he expressed his belief that over the course of his career, he and his classmates were likely to see even greater change, and at even more rapid pace.

He wanted to know what advice I had for how to handle that change.

Instinctively, I began – not by talking about the best way to handle change, but rather, how being anchored in those things that remain the same help us to deal with that change.

For example, I told him that being a sailor and going to sea really isn't that much different than it was two or three hundred years ago. It's just as dangerous and unforgiving. We still stand watches. We still navigate by the constellations in the heavens – although today it's a constellation of satellites. But it's still based on many of the principles of celestial navigation that sailors have been using for hundreds of years.

I told him how the important things remain the same *despite change*. And I believe that in that thought lies the answer to who we are as Coast Guardsmen.

This is our way. It is in those things that endure – character, culture, ethos, the manners of our profession – all those things that remain the same and withstand the test of time – that help us to find who we are, and define our way as Coast Guardsmen.

Some of those things we teach – at our Training Centers like Cape May, Yorktown and Petaluma, or the Coast Guard Academy and Officer Candidate School.

Some you will find in our publications like the new Pub 1. But – perhaps the most important – we learn from one another, and from all those who have come before. From that long blue line of Coast Guard men and women who have served our country almost since its inception.

You've heard it in the examples I've given this morning. You've seen it in the pictures around me. And it's present in the people you have met this morning and all those who are members of the Coast Guard family.

These things are observed, they are taught, and they are experienced. And eventually they are felt. They become part of who we are.

So this is our way. As I head towards the ladder to lay below from the bridge, I'm still focused on those "uncertain and stormy seas" – the challenges that lie ahead. Prudent mariners prepare for the worst. We rightly focus on the problems – but that's natural because we are problem solvers. But my experiences as a sailor have also given me a strong sense of optimism that has been continuously validated by all that I have observed while travelling throughout my Coast Guard.

My travels across the world have also affirmed my confidence as writers in places as diverse as China and Great Britain have declared us the best equipped and trained maritime security agency globally. They respect us and trust us – not for our strength or capabilities, but rather for who we are and what we stand for – our way.

We have the good fortune to be members of this very unique Service that is always ready when our country needs us. Due to our collection of missions, and legacy agencies we sometimes defy logic when someone attempts to classify us, or to put a label on us. They might be excused for their confusion – we are difficult to understand.

For that reason, whenever I am asked to describe what I am, I always reply with pride, I am a Coast Guardsman. We are Coast Guardsmen. We are Douglas Munro – We are Ray Evans – We are Terrell Horn – We are Travis Obendorf and Chief Leanna Evans, and Petty Officer Rashad Gipson, and Cadet Eric Jackson and thousands of others in our long blue line who have placed service before self and answered the Nation's call. It is their example that guides us and defines our way – and shows us the path *forward* through those uncertain and stormy seas.

We are the men and women of the United States Coast Guard.
This is our chosen profession.
This is who we are.

This is our way.